



BRILL

Parmenides' Conception of Light

Author(s): W. J. Verdenius

Reviewed work(s):

Source: *Mnemosyne*, Fourth Series, Vol. 2, Fasc. 2 (1949), pp. 116-131

Published by: **BRILL**

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4427169>

Accessed: 04/12/2012 15:49

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at

<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



BRILL is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Mnemosyne*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

PARMENIDES' CONCEPTION OF LIGHT*

BY

W. J. VERDENIUS

In this paper I shall deal with a problem in the philosophy of Parmenides which has been rather neglected, because it did not seem to be a problem at all. Parmenides based his cosmology on the dualism of two primary substances, Fire or Light and Night. It is commonly held that he borrowed this conception from Pythagoreanism¹⁾. There is indeed some ground for believing that he was acquainted with the Pythagoreans and underwent some influence from their ideas²⁾. It is also to be admitted that the Pythagoreans held a dualistic conception of reality and that the contrast Light-Darkness occurred in their list of contraries³⁾. However, there remains this important point of difference that they seem to have regarded the contrast Light-Darkness as a special aspect of the primary contrast Limit-Unlimited, whereas Parmenides made Light and Darkness the fundamental principles of the phenomenal world⁴⁾.

*) Paper read before the Xth International Congress of Philosophy, at Amsterdam on August 12, 1948.

1) Cf. my thesis, *Parmenides. Some Comments on his Poem* (Groningen 1942), 25/26. To the references mentioned there may now be added K. Freeman, *The Pre-Socratic Philosophers* (Oxford 1946), 150, J. E. Raven, *Pythagoreans and Eleatics* (Cambridge 1948), 40/41.

2) Cf. VS 28, A 1, 21; A 4; A 12. For influence of Pythagorean mathematics on Parmenides, see J. Stenzel, *Metaphysik des Altertums* (Munich-Berlin 1931), 47, F. Enriques, *Histoire de la pensée scientifique*, II (Paris 1936), 45, and my thesis, 1 n. 2. There may also have been some influence of Pythagorean medicine, as is suggested by O. Gigon, *Der Ursprung der griechischen Philosophie* (Basel 1945), 287. I doubt whether Parmenides should have regarded knowledge as a means of purification, as is maintained by R. Mondolfo, Zeller, *La filosofia dei Greci*, II (Florence 1938), 600.

3) Arist. *Met.* 986a, 25.

4) I cannot agree with W. Jaeger, *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers* (Oxford 1947), 64, that Light and Night formed the primeval antithesis of Pythagorean cosmology. O. Gigon, *op. cit.*, 272/273, presumes

The fundamental character of these principles cannot be accounted for by the fact that the contrast Light-Darkness is also found in one other philosophical system, but it seems to presuppose a deeper motive.

We might look for such a deeper motive in a general religious belief. In this connection it has been remarked that Orphism thought of man as being made up of two elements, an earthly body and an etherial soul⁵⁾. However, there is no evidence that Parmenides should have been influenced by Orphic beliefs; the resemblance is confined to some linguistic parallels⁶⁾. Besides, it is true that Parmenides called Fire "etherial", but it cannot be maintained, as was done by Aristotle, that he identified Night with Earth⁷⁾. Finally, Orphism does not seem to have extended its dualistic conception of man to a dualistic cosmology; Night and Ether play some part in Orphic speculations, but they have only a genealogical function⁸⁾.

that Parmenides borrowed the contrast Light-Night from Anaximander. But our sources only attribute a primary contrast Hot-Cold to Anaximander (VS 12, A 10). Raven, *loc. cit.*, says: "The answer to the reasonable question, why φῶς and νύξ head the list of opposites in the Way of Seeming instead of the primary πέρας and ἀπειρον, is simply that the latter pair, being νοητά, have already been disposed of in the Way of Truth". But this does not explain why Parmenides chose Light and Darkness, and not another pair of contraries, e.g. Male-Female, from the Pythagorean list.

5) G. Vlastos, *Parmenides' Theory of Knowledge*, Trans. Am. Philol. Ass. 77 (1946), 75.

6) Cf. W. K. C. Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion* (London 1935), 231.

7) Frag. 8, 56. The gates of Night and Day are also called "etherial" (frag. 1, 13). On Aristotle's misinterpretation of Night as Earth cf. H. Cherniss, *Aristotle's Criticism of Presocratic Philosophy* (Baltimore 1935), 48 n. 192. This does not imply that Parmenides should not have regarded Earth as a materialization of Night. Cf. Gigon, *op. cit.*, 272/273, Vlastos, *op. cit.*, 67 n. 9.

8) Cf. Guthrie, *op. cit.*, 80 ff., 102 ff. The goddess Night also occurs in Homer and Hesiod, but her importance should not be overrated. She is said to be feared by Zeus (*Iliad* 14, 261), but these words are spoken by Hypnos, who is likely to exaggerate her dignity. According to Hesiod (*Theog.* 123/124), Night and Day or Ether are born of Chaos. However, they do not form the basis of a cosmological dualism, for there is also, and quite unrelated to them, the contrast Earth-Heavens. So I cannot agree with Gigon, *op. cit.*, 34, that Hesiod's Night and Day suggested to Anaximander his dualism of Hot and Cold. Cf. also R. Bultmann, *Zur Geschichte der Lichtsymbolik im Altertum*, Phil. 97 (1948), 12: "Erst in der hellenistischen

Leaving this explanation aside we might remember that the Greeks were inclined to represent not only life and death, but also various aspects of beauty and goodness and their contraries in terms of light and darkness⁹⁾. This tendency has been supposed to form the background of Parmenides' cosmology¹⁰⁾. Parmenides may have possessed the Greek sense of light and darkness to a particular high degree. Yet this does not seem to be a sufficient explanation, for the general tendency confined itself to the interpretation of certain values, whereas Parmenides contended that all things are nothing else but Light and Darkness¹¹⁾.

So let us direct our attention from the Greek mind in general to the particular nature of Parmenides' mind. It has recently been suggested that Parmenides, who was a poet, may have been so strongly impressed by the struggle between Light and Darkness at twilight that he took it to be the key to the riddle of the world¹²⁾. However, that a philosopher should have developed a whole cosmology out of a poetical vision of twilight, seems too romantic to be true¹³⁾. The poetical qualities of his work have seldom really

Zeit dringt der Sonnenkult aus dem Osten in die griechisch-römische Welt ein, und dann erst wird das Licht zu einer kosmischen Grösse, zum Inbegriff der göttlichen Macht schlechthin, die im Kampf mit der Gegenmacht der Finsternis steht".

9) Cf. Bultmann, *op. cit.*, 8 ff.

10) J. V. Kopp, *Das physikalische Weltbild in der frühen griechischen Dichtung* (Freiburg i. d. Schw. 1939), 252. I followed this view in my thesis, 26, where I have pointed out that the metaphorical use of light and darkness is especially prominent in Pindar, and that our term "metaphor" is misleading in this connection, because Pindar, when calling e.g. his poem a light, probably conceived of light as one real power pervading both the physical and the spiritual worlds. This should also be remembered when dealing with expressions such as ἀκό τηλεφανής (Soph. *Phil.* 189), σάλπιγξ ἐπέφλεγεν (Aesch. *Pers.* 393), commonly explained as αἰσθητός ὄντι αἰσθήσεως. There is not simply a substitution here, for visual terms are far more often applied to auditory phenomena than reversely; they always have a certain pregnant force owing to the fact that "light" could have a wider meaning.

11) Frag. 9.

12) J. E. Boodin, *The Vision of Parmenides*, Philos. Rev. 52 (1943), 588/589.

13) There is a curious resemblance between this view and the romantic interpretation of Pindar by L. W. Lyde, *Contexts in Pindar with Reference to the Meaning of φέγγος* (Manchester 1935), 41, who maintains that Pindar

been admired¹⁴⁾). He probably clothed his doctrine in verse-form, because this was the natural vehicle for the expression of a divine revelation and because he believed it to be a good medium of instruction for his pupils¹⁵⁾.

Perhaps another aspect of his mind may bring us nearer to the solution of our problem. In the proem of his work Parmenides describes his discovery of the truth as a journey from the realm of Darkness to the realm of Light. Driving a car and guided by Sun-maidens he passes through the gates of Night and Day and is kindly welcomed by a goddess who discloses to him the principles of reality. There is much in this description that may be regarded as mere poetical imagery, but there are also many details which have a serious meaning. I shall only mention those points which have some bearing upon the present question.

First of all, the road which leads him to the realm of Light is called a sacred road and is said to lie far from the beaten track of man¹⁶⁾). Accordingly, his being admitted to this realm is attributed to a special favour of Destiny¹⁷⁾). The goddess addresses him as one who will receive a divine revelation¹⁸⁾). This is sufficient to show that Parmenides represents himself as an initiate who is called to watch a mystery¹⁹⁾). Many scholars have failed to see in the use of these terms of mystery religion anything but an attempt of the author allegorically to proclaim the importance of his new doctrine²⁰⁾). However, as has been convincingly argued by Professor Jaeger in his Gifford Lectures, anyone who reads

did "a large proportion of his work under the influence of the emotional light—in the early hours and in the late hours of the day".

14) Cf. H. Diels, *Parmenides Lehrgedicht* (Berlin 1897), 4 ff.

15) Cf. my thesis, 2, Freeman, *op. cit.*, 141, W. Jaeger, *Paideia*, I, 2d Engl. ed. (Oxford 1945), 177, *Theology*, 92/94.

16) Frag. 1,3 (cf. my thesis, 66), frag. 1,27.

17) Frag. 1,26 and 28.

18) On the meaning of *κοῦρε* (frag. 1,24) see Mnemos. III 13 (1947), 285.

19) Cf. C. M. Bowra, *The Proem of Parmenides*, Class. Quart. 32 (1937), 109, Jaeger, *Paideia*, I, 178, *Theology*, 95/96. I cannot agree with Jaeger, *Theology*, 225 n. 23, that in frag. 1,3 we should read *άστυνη* and that Parmenides should have "a way of salvation" in mind. I have defended the traditional reading *άστυ* Mnemos. III 13 (1947), 284/285.

20) E.g. Bowra, *op. cit.*, 98: "Parmenides is plainly allegorizing... What he really describes is the transition from ignorance to knowledge".

the proem with an open mind, will admit that to Parmenides his journey to the realm of Light and his meeting the goddess were a genuine religious experience²¹⁾.

It will be worth-while to inquire into the nature of this experience. Here I must disagree with Professor Jaeger. When Parmenides represents himself as an initiate who receives a revelation, it does not follow that he should have felt "a mere instrument" of a divine power²²⁾. It is true that he owes his initiation to divine providence, but this does not imply that he should have entered the realm of Light "not by his own powers"²³⁾. It is true that he looked upon his knowledge as a divine gift²⁴⁾, but this does not mean that he should not at the same time have considered it his own achievement. At the beginning of his journey he already calls himself "the man who knows"²⁵⁾, he allows himself to be carried by his horses "as far as he desires", and these horses, which personify his striving after knowledge, are "pondering many things"²⁶⁾. Similarly, the road along which he drives and which symbolizes his thinking-process, is called "telling many things"²⁷⁾. The goddess, who "tells" him everything, also exhorts him to "judge" her words "by argument"²⁸⁾.

These quotations show that in Parmenides' belief divine grace did not rule out human initiative and that he took the revelation of the goddess to be at the same time his own discovery. We are accustomed to draw a sharp distinction between the rule of pro-

21) Cf. Jaeger, *Theology*, 96 ff. See also my thesis, 67.

22) *Op. cit.*, 98.

23) *Op. cit.*, 96.

24) *Op. cit.*, 98. The goddess "tells" him everything, while he "listens" and "learns": frags. 1,26, 28, 31; 2,1; 8,7, 52, 60.

25) Frag. 1,3. He contrasts himself with the βροτοί εἰδότες οὐδέν (frag. 6,4), as has been rightly pointed out by A. H. Coxon, *The Philosophy of Parmenides*, Class. Quart. 28 (1934), 134 n. 10.

26) Frag. 1,1 and 4. On the meaning of πολύφραστοι see my thesis, 11 n. 4.

27) Frag. 1, 2 On the meaning of πολύφημον see H. Fränkel, *Parmenidesstudien*, Nachr. Gött. Ges. d. W. (1930), 155 n. 4. K. Joël, *Geschichte der antiken Philosophie*, I (Tübingen 1921), 417, is decidedly wrong in regarding the use of πολυ- as a sneer at empiricism ("ein fast grinsendes Spielen mit diesem Einzelnen"). Cf. B. Snell, *Die Ausdrücke für den Begriff des Wissens i.d. vorplat. Phil.* (Berlin 1924), 67, *Gnomon* 7 (1931), 81, *Neue Jbb. f. Ant. u. dt. Bild.* 2 (1939), 406.

28) Frag. 7,5. Cf. my thesis, 64.

vidence and human liberty, and so it is difficult for us to imagine ourselves in a sphere of thought in which these two factors were correlated in such a way that they formed the complementary aspects of one and the same thing. Parmenides' relation to his goddess is not one of devotion and humiliation, but rather of cooperation: he even shakes hands with her²⁹⁾). It should also be noted that this goddess remains anonymous; this has been rightly explained by the fact that "she is a symbol for the poet's personal experience and his own discovery of the truth. This experience is unique to him, and therefore he can hardly attribute it to a goddess who is shared with other men"³⁰⁾. However, the term "symbol" is somewhat misleading, for a symbol usually stands for something else; the goddess not only stands for Parmenides' experience, but at the same time she is a real goddess.

We may call this paradoxical unity of god and man "mysticism"³¹⁾. This leads us back to our point of departure. What is the meaning of the Sun-maidens who "point the way" to the philosopher and who manage to get him admittance to the realm of Light? Sextus Empiricus took them to be the organs of sense, and this interpretation has even been defended in recent times³²⁾. But it is really absurd to suppose that Parmenides should have regarded sense-perception as a means to reach the goddess, i.e.,

29) Frag. 1,22. The fact that he owes his admittance to Δίκη (frag. 1,14, 28) also belongs here. This Δίκη is called πολύποινος, which has been correctly explained by Fränkel, *op. cit.*, 164/165, as "rewarding": though his thinking power is a divine gift, Parmenides may give himself credit for it, so that admittance is due to him as a rightful reward. Fränkel has some good remarks on the unity of god and man: "Die Person hat sozusagen noch keine undurchlässige Aussenhaut, und der Gott ist keineswegs etwas bloss Fremdes. Kräfte strömen in den Menschen frei hinein; er weiss, dass sie göttlich sind, weil sie über ihn kommen wie eine Gabe und Gnade... Und doch darf er die Kräfte die in ihn einzogen, seine Kräfte, ein Stück der eignen Natur nennen... Je grösser eines Menschen Natur ist, desto mehr Göttliches ist in ihr und kommt zu ihr". Pindar has a similar conception, cf. my thesis, 30, and H. Strohm, *Tyche. Zur Schicksalsauffassung bei Pindar und den frühgriechischen Dichtern* (Stuttgart 1944), 24 ff.

30) Bowra, *op. cit.*, 106. Cf. Fränkel, *op. cit.*, 156: "Gemeint ist etwas, das auf den Menschen als Kraft wirkt: die Kraft der Erkenntnis, und der Lehre als Lehrinhalt, und der Lehre als Lehrverkündigung".

31) Cf. Bowra, *op. cit.*, 112, my thesis, 67/68.

32) VS I, p. 228, 3. Freeman, *op. cit.*, 142, 146.

to reach a point of view from which he could survey the whole of reality and which made him see through the relative value of the senses³³⁾). It should also be remembered that the Sun-maidens continue their guidance after he has passed through the gates of Night and Day and are still present when the goddess speaks³⁴⁾). It is obvious that they are closely related to the goddess; we may regard them as envoys from the realm of Light. But just as the horses and the road they must also have a psychological significance: they personify the special mental powers which led the philosopher on his way to higher knowledge³⁵⁾). These powers are the lightful element in his mind, and his journey under their guidance means his gradual illumination which reached its completion in his shaking hands with the goddess of Light.

Parmenides undoubtedly took this illumination literally as a luminous phenomenon surrounding and pervading his mind. This is not to be wondered at, if we remember that he possessed a mystical nature. The symbolism of light plays an important part in many religions; the Divine, deliverance, the new life, revelation, religious truth and knowledge are often denoted by "light"³⁶⁾). In many cases the use of this term is metaphorical; light renders things manifest and gives them life, two notions which are also fundamental principles of religion. On the other hand, the Divine and its manifestations have often been imagined actually to consist of

33) Frags. 1,28, 7,3/4.

34) Frag. 1,21, 24.

35) Cf. Fränkel, *op. cit.*, 165.

36) Cf. Cl. Bäumker, *Witelo, ein Philosoph und Naturforscher des 13. Jahrh.* (Beitr. z. Gesch. d. Philos. d. Mittelalt. III 2, Münster 1908), 357/467, R. A. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam* (London 1914), 50 ff., Hasting's Enc. of Rel. and Eth., art. "Light and Darkness", G. P. Wetter, *Phōs* (Uppsala 1915), *Enzykl. d. Islam*, art. "Nür", C. G. Jung, *Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido*² (Leipzig-Vienna 1925), Ch. V, J. Hertel, *Die arische Feuerlehre* (Leipzig 1925), *Die Sonne und Mithra im Awesta* (Leipzig 1927), R. Jolivet, *Dieu, soleil des esprits; la doctrine augustinienne de l'illumination* (Paris 1934), E. R. Goodenough, *By Light, Light. The Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism* (New Haven 1935), J. Dölger, *Lumen Christi*, Ant. u. Chr. 5 (1936), 1/43, E. Bevan, *Symbolism and Belief* (London 1938), Ch. V: "Light", *Eranos-Jahrbuch* 10 (1943): *Alte Sonnenkulte und die Lichtsymbolik in der Gnosis und im frühen Christentum*, Bultmann, *op. cit.*, 24 ff., where further literature is mentioned.

light³⁷). I shall not go into the difficult question which may have been the motives of such a literal conception³⁸). I only want to observe that this conception mostly occurs in works which have a certain mystical flavour³⁹). The sensation of being pervaded by a higher kind of light has been recorded by many mystics of different countries and different times. In order to show that this experience of a divine illumination has a typical character, I shall quote a few instances.

The Hermetic treatise *Poimandres* begins with a vision of light: "I beheld a boundless view; all was changed into light, a mild and joyous light"⁴⁰). Plotinus declared intelligible contemplation to be the perception of a genuine inner light⁴¹). Symeon describes

37) This is rightly pointed out by Wetter, *op. cit.* See also M. Pulver, *Die Lichtenfahrt im Johannes-Evangelium, im Corpus Hermeticum, in der Gnosis und in der Ostkirche*, Eranos-Jb. 10 (1943), 253/296, who argues that these religious documents presuppose a genuine experience of light. Many examples of such a literal conception are given by Bäumker, *op. cit.*

38) R. Otto, *Gottheit und Gottheiten der Arier* (Giessen 1932), 30/31, explains the vision of divine light as "eine numinose Glut-schau", "die Er-schauung des furchtbar Gegenwärtigen in Gestalt eines schreckend Brennenden, Lohenden, Glühenden, glühend Verzehrenden", because "das physikalische Analogon zu Zorn ist Glut" (p. 10). C. G. Jung, *op. cit.*, 112, regards the phenomenon as a manifestation of life-energy, "die mit Recht, ich darf wohl sagen, mit physikalischem Recht, Sonne genannt wird, denn unsere Energie- und Lebensquelle ist die Sonne. So ist unsere Lebewssubstanz als ein energetischer Prozess ganz Sonne". Cf. D. H. Lawrence, *Apocalypse* (The Albatross 1932), 75: "The sun has a great blazing consciousness, and I have a little blazing consciousness. When I can strip myself of the trash of personal feelings and ideas, and get down to my naked sun-self, then the sun and I can communicate by the hour, the blazing interchange". However, these explanations seem to overlook the most important factor, viz. the experience of enlightenment which also gave rise to the expression "a light dawned upon me". Cf. also Bultmann, *op. cit.*, 13/14.

39) I do not contend that mysticism is the only root of the literal conception of light, but only that it is an important factor which should not be neglected. This is done e.g. by Wetter, who attributes a strong influence to Oriental star-worship and the spectacles of Greek mystery-religion, taking mysticism into account only in so far as it refined an already existing conception (*op. cit.*, 35/36, 59, 142/144, 150/152, 160/161, 164/165). Cf. also J. H. Leuba, *The Psychology of Religious Mysticism* (London 1925), 50, who rightly remarks: "The mystical character of St. Paul's religious experience and teaching is not always sufficiently recognized".

40) I 4. Translation by W. Scott, *Hermetica*, I (Oxford 1924).

41) *Enn.* V 5, 7; VI 7, 36; VI 9, 9. Cf. Bultmann, *op. cit.*, 32 ff.

his vision of the Divine as a shining mist which first enveloped his head and then rose as a sun in the midst of his heart. He felt himself entirely transformed into this light, which he calls "the truly being Light and the creator of all other light". It is formless, endless, indivisible, and inexhaustible, it opens the heavens, dispells darkness, and reveals everything⁴²⁾). A similar description is given by the 12th century mystic Hildegard von Bingen: since her youth she always saw a light in herself which seemed a bright mist; it could not be localized and its form was imperceptible; it served as the background of her visions. Sometimes she perceived in it another light, which she called "the living light"⁴³⁾). Many nuns of the 14th century had such visions: in their moments of ecstasy they felt themselves entirely pervaded and surrounded by a divine light⁴⁴⁾). In the 16th century the Spanish saint Theresa beheld the Holy Trinity as an inflammation in her mind similar to a cloud of the utmost brightness, and the Saviour appeared to her in a light much brighter than the sun⁴⁵⁾). Such illuminations continue to occur even in modern times⁴⁶⁾).

42) Cf. M. Buber, *Ekstatische Konfessionen* (Jena 1909), 42/49.

43) Cf. Buber, *op. cit.*, 51/52, H. Liebschütz, *Das allegorische Weltbild der hl. Hildegard von Bingen* (Stud. d. Bibl. Warburg XVI, Leipzig-Berlin 1930), 50 n. 1, 64, 168/169. Liebschütz presumes that Hildegard borrowed her conception of light as the medium of knowledge from Hermetic literature (*op. cit.*, 50 n. 1). The above quotations seem to show that this conception is connected with the mystic nature as such and so could arise spontaneously.

44) Cf. E. Schiller, *Das mystische Leben der Ordensschwestern zu Töss* (Zürich 1903), 51, 68, L. Zöpf, *Die Mystikerin Margarethe Ebner* (Beitr. z. Kulturgesch. d. Mitt. u. d. Ren. XVI, Leipzig 1914), 86/89. Cf. also the autobiography of Heinrich Suzo, Ch. V.

45) Cf. her autobiography, Ch. XXXIII, and her *Inner Castle*, Ch. VII, 1.

46) A striking case is reported by P. Janet, *De l'angoisse à l'extase* (Paris 1926-28), I, 111 ff., where an ecstatic woman expresses herself as follows: "Je vois toujours le Saint-Sacrement entouré d'un éclat, d'une lumière qui me pénètre tout entière", "Il se fait dans mon esprit comme une lumière qui amène la compréhension d'une foule de choses". For more examples cf. J. B. Pratt, *The Religious Consciousness* (New York 1921), 403 n. 13, Leuba, *op. cit.*, 205, 255/258, and especially F. J. Tolsma, *Inductie, religieuze groeps-vorming en godsdienstwaanzin* (Amsterdam 1945), 55 (a young man imagines himself to rise up to the heavens; the whole world consists of light; still rising higher he sees a strong light; he feels to be in the presence of God; hearing a voice from the light he seizes the meaning of the universe).

They are also found in non-European religions. A Sufi poet of the 11th century sang: "Like a candle I was melting in His fire: amidst the flames outflashing—only God I saw", and another Islam mystic said: "Once I beheld the Light, and I fixed my gaze upon it until I became the Light" ⁴⁷⁾. Buddhism also knows of illumination: Buddha himself is told to have gradually increased his clairvoyance; at first he only beheld a vague lustre, but through concentrated meditation he was able to enter into conversation with the divine powers which manifested themselves in the light ⁴⁸⁾. The most striking description of such a vision is to be found in the Chinese treatise *The Secret of the Golden Flower* which goes back to the 8th century. The author tells us that prolonged meditation may sometimes produce the following experience: the light of the eyes begins to flare up, so that the whole field of vision becomes very bright, just as if one were in a cloud. The limits of the human body disappear, and everything inside and outside is full of the same light. Since all movements of the mind also consist of this light, the illumination of an individual meditator may extend through the whole of Nature ⁴⁹⁾.

47) Cf. Nicholson, *op. cit.*, 59, 94. See also F. Meier in *Eranos-Jahrb.* 13 (1945), 304 ff.

48) H. Beck, *Buddhismus*, II (Berlin/Leipzig 1916), 55.56. Mental illumination plays an important part in the *Rigveda* and the *Upanishads*, cf. M. Falk, *Il mito psicologico nell'India antica*, Atti d. R. Acc. Naz. d. Linzei VI, 8 (1938/39), 457, 471, 510/1, 530, 600, *Nāma-rūpa and Dharma-rūpa* (Calcutta 1943), 5/6, 9/11, 16/17, 28, 44/45, 84, 159/160, E. Abegg, *Indische Psychologie* (Zürich 1945), 73, 76/77, W. Ruben, *Die Philosophen der Upanishaden* (Bern 1947), 127/128. I cannot agree with Abegg's words "Die Lichthaftigkeit des Purusha ist natürlich nur ein Bild" (*op. cit.*, 77).

49) Cf. R. Wilhelm-C. G. Jung, *Das Geheimnis der goldenen Blüte. Ein chinesisches Lebensbuch* (Berlin 1929), 113, 132. There are more interesting parallels between the Pre-Socratics and later forms of mysticism. Cf. H. Fränkel, Am. Journ. Phil. 59 (1938), 325 n. 35, who points out some striking similarities between Heraclitus and the 14th century mystic Tauler. In the *Secret of the Golden Flower* (114/115) we read: "Innerhalb unseres sechs Fuss hohen Leibes müssen wir streben nach der Gestalt, die vor Grundlegung von Himmel und Erde ist. Wenn heute die Leute nur eine bis zwei Stunden in Meditation sitzen und nur ihr eigenes Ich betrachten und das Widerspiegelung (Kontemplation) nennen: wie soll dabei etwas herauskommen". This strongly reminds us of Heraclitus frag. 2: δεῖ ἐπεσθαι τῷ ξυνῷ · τοῦ λόγου δ' ἔόντος ξυνοῦ ζώουσιν οἱ πολλοὶ ως ιδίαν ἔχοντες φρόνησιν. See also p. 130 n. 67.

Parmenides seems to have had a similar vision of a divine light which not only illuminated his own mind, but also its object, the realm of truth. Now my point is that this experience of light was probably so strong with him that he came to conceive of the whole world in terms of light and darkness. He looked upon his mental activity as a struggle between these two powers, and as a true mystic projected this feeling of a dualism into reality⁵⁰⁾.

The probability of such a projection is strengthened by what we know of his epistemology. The gist of this doctrine is the identity of the subject and the object of knowledge. There is no explicit statement of this, for Parmenides only says: "The nature of our limbs is the same as what it knows"⁵¹⁾. These words are commonly taken to mean a correspondence or an identity between our knowledge and our bodily constitution. But Parmenides probably considered this bodily constitution not only to underlie the faculty of knowledge and thus to affect the substance of knowledge, but

50) In the text the differences between the various forms of mysticism have been left out of consideration, though in other respects they may be important. For instance, it has been pointed out that "on returning from that ecstatic condition where the greatest amount of truth is seen, the mystic seems least able to bring with him any of these truths to the light of common day" (Pratt, *op. cit.*, 408, cf. Leuba, *op. cit.*, 274 ff., G. Berguer, *Traité de psychologie de la religion*, Lausanne 1946, 220 ff.). This does not hold good for Parmenides, because his mysticism is thoroughly blended with rational thinking.

51) Frag. 16, 2/3. In my thesis (p. 7) I took *μέλεα* to mean "something between the two universal "Forms" and the parts of the human frame"; I now follow Fränkel, *Parmenidesstudien*, 172 n. 3, who argues that the word means the human frame itself, since there was no special term at this time for the living body as a whole. Cf. Fränkel, Gött. Gel. Anz. (1922), 193 f., B. Snell, *Die Entdeckung des Geistes*² (Hamburg 1948), 19/22. For the above translation of frag. 16, 2/3 see my thesis, 14/18. This interpretation was already given by Fränkel, *Parmenidesstud.*, 173 (whose translation I misunderstood in my thesis, 15 n. 1). In my thesis I have not sufficiently explained my view of the identity of subject and object implied in frag. 16, as was pointed out to me by Dr E. J. Dijksterhuis. The above discussion is intended to show that in Parmenides' thought there is not only an equality of constitution, but even a coincidence of place between the organs of knowledge and the objects of knowledge. On this point I disagree with Fränkel, who maintains (*op. cit.*, 173): "Freilich ist es keine materielle Identität (der Mensch sieht nicht sich selbst), sondern eine qualitative: seine eigne *μελέων φύσις* oder *κράτος* ... sieht er rings um sich her; er erlebt eine gleichartige Welt um sich".

also to form the object of knowledge and thus completely to determine its substance. This may be concluded from the fact that knowledge is said to depend on the momentary mixture of the "much-wandering" limbs⁵²⁾. Parmenides would not have stressed the momentary character of the bodily constitution, if he had only wanted to point out the influence of the body on the mind. Besides, the body is called "much-wandering", a term which must mean something else than that it is in motion, for this is no permanent characteristic. Parmenides uses this term to denote the instability of the phenomenal world, and he explains this instability by the fact that in any single object the mutual proportion of the elements of Light and Darkness is ever-changing⁵³⁾. This would be impossible, if the elements of such an object could not be supplied and absorbed by the surrounding world. So the elements of the human frame cannot be enclosed by impenetrable limits, and the fact that Parmenides here gives them an epithet which emphasizes their connection with a wider reality, seems to show that he regarded the body as the mediator between knowledge and reality. Virtually it is the object of knowledge itself, for reality can only be known in so far as its wandering elements penetrate into the human frame and determine its momentary constitution.

This means that there is only a vague distinction between the inner and the outer worlds⁵⁴⁾. It is difficult for us to imagine such a continuous connection between man and cosmos. Lawrence remarked in his *Apocalypse*: "We have lost the cosmos, by coming out of responsive connection with it, and this is our chief tra-

52) Frag. 16, 1. I have defended the reading ἐκάστοτε in my thesis, 6 ff.; it is now also adopted by Fränkel, Cl. Phil. 41 (1946), 168, and Vlastos, *op. cit.*, 66.

53) On the meaning of πολύπλαγχτος, see my thesis, 7/9.

54) R. Wilhelm in his Introduction to *The Secret of the Golden Flower* (*op. cit.*, 90) points out that this treatise is based on the principle "dass Kosmos und Mensch im Grunde gemeinsamen Gesetzen gehorchen, dass der Mensch ein Kosmos im kleinen und von dem grossen Kosmos nicht durch feste Schranken geschieden ist. Dieselben Gesetze herrschen hier wie dort, und vom einen Zustand aus eröffnet sich der Zugang zum andern. Psyche und Kosmos verhalten sich wie Innenwelt und Umwelt. Der Mensch partizipiert daher naturhaft an allem kosmischen Geschehen und ist innerlich wie äusserlich mit ihm verwoben".

gedy”⁵⁵⁾. I shall not discuss the second part of this quotation, but at any rate the lack of cosmic imagination has been the chief tragedy of many interpretations of pre-Socratic philosophy. According to Parmenides, the elements of Light and Darkness are wandering through the cosmos, of which the human mind is an integral part. In this sphere of thought knowledge is not the result of a contact between the mind and its objects, for the concept of contact does not yet exist. Therefore, strictly speaking it is not correct to say that the elements of reality penetrate into, or flow through, the human being⁵⁶⁾; at a certain point they manifest themselves as a human mind and at the same time as the knowledge possessed by that mind. So knowledge is but a special aspect of reality itself, a slight vibration of a cosmical wave.

This unity of the subject and the object of knowledge arises from the same mysticism which also underlies Parmenides’ conception of the unity of man and god. It might be argued that mysticism and epistemology should be kept apart, because the first is a matter of religious vision and the latter of theoretical thinking. But early Greek thought, in spite of its abstractness, had a strongly religious character. In the *Secret of the Golden Flower* it is remarked that “when thinking is concentrated between the eyes, light comes in of itself”⁵⁷⁾. Similarly, to Parmenides thinking about his relation to reality and getting illuminated by a divine power were not incompatible.

Finally we must face the problem of the relation between the realm of Light in which resides the goddess of truth, and the power of Light which operates in the phenomenal world. The latter is regarded by Parmenides as equal to the power of Darkness, so that the phenomenal world is bound up with a fundamental dualism⁵⁸⁾. Ordinary mortals are unable to free themselves from this empirical point of view, because their minds are wandering

55) D. H. Lawrence, *Apocalypse* (The Albatross 1932), 74. Cf. p. 77: “We and the cosmos are one. The cosmos is a vast living body, of which we are still parts”.

56) As I did in my thesis, 27.

57) *Op. cit.*, 116.

58) Frag. 9, 4. Cf. my thesis, 62/63, where I have tried to show that frag. 8, 54: τῶν μίαν οὐ χρεών ἔστιν, does not modify this dualism. See also

along with the mixture of these two powers⁵⁹⁾). The philosopher, however, owing to a preponderance of light in his mind⁶⁰⁾, achieves to transcend the realm of "opinion" and to reach the plane of truth. From a systematical point of view this sphere ought to be free from empirical associations. Yet Parmenides represented it as the realm of Light; we have seen that this logical inconsistency has a psychological cause: the philosopher experienced his discovery of the truth as an illumination. He even seems to have felt some connection between Light and Being, though he never iden-

Raven, *op. cit.*, 39/40. Vlastos, *op. cit.*, 74, gives the following interpretation: "One of the two forms, the dark, should *not* be named, because non-being is unthinkable and unutterable and darkness is the non-being of light". Similarly, O. Gigon, *Ursprung d. gr. Phil.*, 271. However, Parmenides seems to have regarded **δύομάτειν** as a characteristic of the empirical point of view (cf. frags. 8, 38; 9, 1; 19, 3). Consequently, if I am right in my opinion that he believed his cosmology to be the best possible, i.e. if he adopted the empirical point of view himself (though being conscious of its relative value), he could scarcely have protested against *naming* one of its principles.

59) Frag. 6, 5/7. Cf. my thesis, 8, 19, 55.

60) Frag. 16, 4: **τὸ γὰρ πλέον ἔστι νόημα**. Cf. my thesis, 12/13. Vlastos, *op. cit.*, 72/73, rightly remarks that Parmenides' quest for truth begins with a mere preponderance of light, but that his knowledge of Being presupposes a state of pure light. However, I cannot agree with his note 41: "This conclusion does not (and could not) rest on empirical evidence". This evidence is to be found in Parmenides' experience of a divine illumination. Vlastos refers to frag. 8, 35/36: **οὐ γὰρ ἄνευ τοῦ ἔόντος, ἐν φαντασμάτων ἔστιν, / εὑρίσκεις τὸ νοεῖν**, which he interprets as follows: "Our only clue to the nature of the thought of Being is Being itself". But the words **ἄνευ τοῦ ἔόντος** do not mean "except through Being"; they refer to the preceding sentence **ἔστι νόημα**, and the meaning is that knowledge must be something existing (cf. my thesis, 39/40). Vlastos further holds (*op. cit.*, 67 ff.) that frag. 16 does not contain a general theory of knowledge, but only a doctrine of sense-perception, because it is based on the principle of a mixture. However, Parmenides nowhere excludes the possibility that the preponderance of one of the elements should under certain circumstances (e.g. at his entering the realm of Light) be raised to a ratio of one to zero. Finally, Parmenides is said to have held "a physical theory of sense-perception as distinct from a physical theory of judgment", because the senses have a passive character, whereas judgment belongs to "another dimension of thought in which the mind has the power of initiative" (*op. cit.*, 70). I doubt whether the distinction "active-passive" should be applicable to Parmenides' sphere of thought. In his consciousness his own initiative was at the same time a revelation of the goddess. And this revelation "comes to" him just as sense-impressions "come to" ordinary people. So the term **παρίσταται** (frag. 16, 2) may refer to knowledge in general.

tified them⁶¹⁾. This connection is virtually the same as that between Light and Truth: Parmenides could not conceive of truth as an abstract entity, but he considered it to be an aspect of reality itself, true Being⁶²⁾.

However, Parmenides is not likely to have put this kind of light on a level with phenomenal light. In that case he could not have taken Darkness as a real power in the world, but he ought to have identified it with utter nothingness⁶³⁾. The *Secret of the Golden Flower* seems to contain a helpful illustration of Parmenides' conception of light. The highest principle of reality is Tao, the One, which does not have any form and any name⁶⁴⁾. It is experienced as a heavenly kind of light, which cannot be perceived by bodily eyes⁶⁵⁾. The One is the origin of two subordinate principles, Light and Darkness, Yang and Yin, which only operate in the phenomenal world⁶⁶⁾. This dualistic world is transcended by the philosopher who through illumination succeeds in apprehending the Absolute⁶⁷⁾. It may be suggested that Parmenides in a similar manner

61) Aristotle says that Parmenides equated Fire with Being and Earth with Non-being (*Met.* 987a, 1, *De Gen.* 318b, 6), but this interpretation is inspired by his own doctrines, cf. Cherniss, *op. cit.*, 48 n. 192.

62) There is a resemblance between frag. 1, 29: Ἀληθείης εὐκυκλέος ἡτοι and frag. 8, 4 and 43, where Being is said to be ἀτρεμές and εὐκύκλου σφαίρης ἐναλγκιον δύκω. In my thesis, 63, I wrongly denied any connection between Light and Being.

63) For Parmenides' conception of Non-being as nothingness see my thesis, 42/43.

64) According to Parmenides, "name" and "form" are characteristics of the phenomenal world, cf. frags. 8, 35, 53; 9, 1; 19, 3. This fact is a conclusive objection against Cornford's emendation of the quotation from Parmenides in Plato *The.* 180e: μοῦνον γὰρ Ἀνάγκη / οἷον ἀκίνητόν τε θέλει τῷ παντὶ δονοὶ εἶναι. Cf. F. M. Cornford, *A New Fragment of Parmenides*, Class. Rev. 49 (1935), 122/123. P. Deussen, *Das System des Vedānta* (Leipzig 1883), 500/501, has pointed out the striking resemblance between Parmenides' conception of the phenomenal world and "names" and "forms" in Indian philosophy. Cf. also H. Oldenberg, *Die Lehre der Upanishaden und die Anfänge des Buddhismus* (Göttingen 1915), 68/70, M. Falk, *Nāma-rūpa and Dharma-rūpa* (Calcutta 1943). There are also important differences, cf. W. Ruben, *Indische und griechische Metaphysik*, Zt. f. Indol. u. Iran. 8 (1931), 160/161, 172/173.

65) *Op. cit.*, 101.

66) R. Wilhelm in his Introduction, 91/92.

67) *Op. cit.*, 105. Cf. *Rigveda* III 38, and M. Falk, *Nāma-rūpa*, 4: "The

distinguished between a supreme kind of light as the cognitive aspect of Being and Truth, and an inferior kind of light restricted to the world of change and opinion. This interpretation would fit in very well with the general trend of his philosophy, which tries to attribute the various aspects of the world to a higher and a lower plane of reality⁶⁸⁾.

It might only be asked how Parmenides managed to get from the lower plane of empirical reality up to the higher plane of Being, or in other words: how the ordinary light which formed one of the elements of his mental constitution could pass into the divine light which enabled him to grasp the ultimate principle of reality. This criticism is justified; it could only be met by putting another question: is there anyone who has succeeded in finding a satisfactory transition from psychology to metaphysics?

UTRECHT, Dillenburgstraat 27.

diversification of the primordial cosmic unity is also a concealment of its original nature. The self-luminous moves about clad in the sp'endours of cosmic light, which are not his own forms: 'it is his (form, cf. 7cd), not mine, the golden brightness which Savitar has diffused' (8ab). But the inspiration of the seer penetrates beyond (cf. 1c) the cosmogonic achievements of the kavis to the primal essence, the dharman (2)". For similar ideas in Gnosticism cf. Bultmann, *op. cit.*, 31.

68) For the interpretation of the world of "Opinion" as relative reality, see my thesis, 57 ff. It has been pointed out by Gigon, *Ursprung d. gr. Philos.*, 249, 275, Fränkel, Class. Phil. 41 (1946), 171, and Vlastos, *op. cit.*, 72, 76, that the characteristics of Being serve as a pattern to the phenomenal world (cf. frag. 8, 24: *πᾶν δ' ἔμπλεον ἐστιν ἔόντος*, with frag. 9, 3: *πᾶν πλέον ἐστὶν ὅμοι φάεος καὶ νυκτὸς ἀφάντον*, and frag. 8, 29: *ταύτον*, with frag. 8, 57: *ἐωντῷ πάντοτε ταύτον*). Vlastos in his note 59 takes the latter to be regarded by Parmenides as "absolute unreality". Similarly, G. Verbeke, *De wording van het wijsgerig spiritualisme*, Tijdschr. v. Philos. 8 (1946), 5/6, maintains that Parmenides denied reality to the world of change. However, absolute unreality is attributed by Parmenides to Non-being; change is not identified with Non-being, but it is interpreted as a contradiction of Being and Non-being. This presupposes that Parmenides should have followed "the third road" in his cosmology, a view which has been recently combated by A. H. Coxon, Class. Rev. 60 (1946), 69, and H. Fränkel, Class. Phil. 41 (1946), 170/171. I cannot discuss this problem here.